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Living Faith

One way to see a lion is to look at a stuffed one in a museum. The other way is to see it alive, roaming in the jungle. The one in the museum is just a skin, stuffed and propped up to make it look as if it is standing. Outwardly, it has the appearance of a lion, but it is a lion in form only. People look at such a 'lion' only for instruction, or for recreation. No one feels frightened of it. No one feels the need to run away from it.

But the lion of the jungle is a very different matter. It is a living thing, a symbol of strength. And when it stalks its prey, the whole jungle becomes alarmed. When it roars, the animals are terror-stricken and rush to take refuge up in the trees. When a human being sees a live lion in the jungle, he trembles from head to toe. He begins to lose control of himself. He is not as he was before seeing the lion.

This is an example which helps us to understand God. Belief in God also has two forms. One is faith through imitation, i.e. just following in the footsteps of one's forefathers, while the other is a living faith in God, i.e. a faith discovered, or acquired, on one's own.

A faith through imitation is bound to be a lifeless faith. Such a faith falls short of stirring up one's soul. It does not have the force of a current running through one's veins. It does not create any movement within. This dead faith requires a man only to believe in God without fearing Him.

However, a living faith in God is an entirely different matter. A living faith in God means seeing God as having limitless powers. One who finds such a God does not remain the same person as he was before having had this experience. After the realization of God, his whole existence is completely shaken up. His soul is terror-stricken; his fear is intense. All other problems are completely overshadowed. He is now concerned with one thing alone, and that is God.

A live belief in God and fear of God are inseparable. The moment these become separate, true faith ceases to exist. It is then a dead, not a live faith. And a dead faith is of no value either to man or to God.

The Power of Patience

In the period between the Prophet Moses and Jesus, the Israelites had to fight a war. At that time their army was far less in number than that of their enemy. Their resources were also very limited in comparison. These deficiencies made the Israelites fear for the outcome of the war, for they felt that they did not have sufficient power to vanquish their enemies. (2:249).

According to the Bible, Jonathan (Yuntan) the son of Saul, and leader of the Israelites, said to his armour-bearer, 'Come, and let us go over into the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.' (I Samuel, 14:6)

The same idea is expressed in the Qur'an:

'But those of them who believed that they would meet God (on Judgement day) replied: 'How often has a small group prevailed against a large group by God's command; God is with the steadfast. (2:249)

The words 'small' and 'large' in this verse do not refer just to quantity. They also refer to quality. The words 'small' and 'large' are used in Arabic in the qualitative sense.

This verse of the Qur'an is a statement to the effect that just being fewer in number, or in possession of inferior resources, is not a sure sign of impending defeat for any group about to go into battle with an enemy which is greater in number and stronger in resources. The way of this world has been so designed by its Creator that a weak group can dominate a powerful group, a minority can conquer a majority.

The secret of such a victory – according to this verse – lies in patience. This shows that patience is a state neither of passivity nor of cowardice. It is rather a positive quality. It takes courage to be patient. But patience is so superior a mental state that those who prove to be patient are entitled thereby to the special succour of their Maker. This succour is manifested in many ways, one of the most surprising being in the victory of the weak over the strong.

The present world is a world of trial. Here one group is always in competition with another, and sometimes the one dominates and sometimes the other.

Whenever one group is weakened in confrontation with another group and comes to harm in the process, there are always two kinds of reaction by this weaker group, one being patience, the other being impatience.

An impatient reaction occurs when a man falls a prey to feelings of defeat and depression. He loses all hope, thinking that there is now no future for him. He holds the victors responsible for all his misfortunes, and falls to lamenting and protesting. This is a sure path to destruction. If others managed

to harm him only partially, he now sets out to make his destruction complete by treading this downward path of his own volition.

A patient reaction, on the other hand, leads the injured party to make attempts at restoration. Instead of complaining, he actively begins to think out new strategies. Rather than let himself fall a prey to hopelessness, he ponders over the possibilities of hope. Instead of lamenting over what is lost, he tries to exploit whatever opportunities are still open to him.

Those who opt for this patient approach, even after being harmed, are individuals who are capable of rising above their circumstances. They are capable of elevating themselves to a plane where their potential is awakened and where all their latent powers may be discovered.

Where the impatient person sees loss as loss per se, the patient man sees loss as a challenge thrown down to him by fate. His greatest desire is then to forge ahead and face up to the circumstances. Those who are willing to accept a loss – even welcome it – are the people who will always make progress. They are of such a calibre that they can always convert their failure into a far greater success than before.

Whenever one group is unjust to another, and this latter group attempts, in retaliation, to harm the former, both groups become equally blameworthy when judged by accepted moral standards. Both such groups are then left to tend for themselves, for God will not come to the rescue of either one.

On the contrary, when a group, even in the face of great injustice and cruelty on the part of some other group, remains patient and refrains from retaliation God comes to its assistance. By giving His succour to the oppressed group he then enables it to dominate its oppressors.

It is by remaining patient that the oppressed group receives this divine blessing. Patience is not a state of inertia. It is rather a state in which the most positive kind of action becomes possible. It means, in fact, the conversion of negative feelings, such as hatred and vengeance, into compassion and understanding.

God loves the quality of patience. One who remains patient ultimately develops an indomitable personality. He is favoured by all the laws of nature; through special, divine succour, he becomes an unconquerable force.

Patience enables a man to rise above reactionary psychology. It teaches him to be the well-wisher of his oppressor, even in the face of his wrongdoing. It produces the mentality of returning good for evil. A patient man never curses the wrongdoer; he rather prays to God for His guidance.

Patience, finally makes it possible for a man to ignore provocation, to waste no precious energy in over-hasty action, and to give proper attention to the planning of future strategy. To a very great extent, too, it has a strengthening effect upon his character, in that it arouses his latent capabilities and inculcates a sense of self-discipline. Patience, in short, raises a man from the level of the ordinary to that of the truly exceptional.

7 April 1991

A blessing for one, a liability for another

After the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet presented Hakim ibn Hezam with a gift. It seemed inadequate to Hakim, so the Prophet presented him with something more. "Which of your presents was better?" Hakim asked. "The first," the Prophet replied. "You know, Hakim, this property is a fair green pasture. Whoever receives something given out of generosity shall be blessed therein; but whoever takes something out of greed shall not be blessed therein; and he shall be as one that eats and is not filled. The hand which gives is better than the hand which receives." "Even from you, Prophet of God?" asked Hakim. "Yes, even from me." was the Prophet's reply

(Kanzul Ummal)

Pride and Polytheism

“God will not forgive those who associate other gods with Him; but He will forgive whom he will for other sins. He that associates other gods with Him is guilty of a heinous sin.” (The Qur'an 4:48)

Abdullah ibn Masood has narrated that the Prophet said: “He who has even one iota of pride in him will not enter paradise.” When asked what pride was, he replied: “To ignore the truth and despise other people.”

The most unnatural thing in this world – being against the facts – is to place some person or thing on a higher plane of greatness than the Almighty. In the eyes of God, there can be no greater crime. When a man regards himself as great, he commits the sin of pride. And when he regards something or someone else as great he commits the sin of polytheism.

The realization of the greatness of God demolishes all other greatness, including one's own. Polytheism implies the association of something other than God with greatness, while pride implies one's own sense of superiority.

The present world is a world of trial. That is why all kinds of people have been given the opportunity to live here. But the world of the Hereafter is an ideal world. It is only those who have proved their ability to live at the level of facts in the present world of trial, who will find an honourable place there. To live in the world of pride and polytheism is to live in an abyss of non-reality. That is why those who live lives of pride and polytheism will be considered undeserving of a place in the eternal world of the Hereafter.

8 April 1991

Paying full attention to what even an unimportant person says

Abu Rafa'a Tameem ibn Usyad says that he came from his own land to see the Prophet. "He was giving a sermon when I arrived. I told him that I was a travelling man, and did not know much about religion. 'I have come to hear about it from you,' I said. The Prophet forgot about his sermon, and came towards me. He sat down next to me, and started telling me about what God had revealed to him. After he had finished, he went back and completed his sermon."

(Muslim)

Acceptance of Reality An Analysis of National Disunity

During a three-week tour of Japan and the USA, in December 1990, I happened to meet a Kuwaiti refugee who launched into a sorry tale of all the hardships he had encountered before reaching a place of safety. He said very pointedly what an advantage he thought it to be an Indian citizen. "The very size of your country rules out such tragic events as have taken place in my country. You are safe from the grave injustice of a neighbouring country suddenly, and without warning, usurping Indian rule. Kuwait, being a small country, cannot ever have that degree of security." He was, of course, referring to that fateful moment on the second of August, 1990, when President Saddam Hussein of Iraq sent his 200,000 strong army into Kuwait where, encountering no resistance, they took over the government of the country. Overnight, the Kuwaitis found that their comfortable lives, their wealth, their property, their honour were all in jeopardy. With this desperate feeling of insecurity, there was nothing for it but to flee Kuwait, leaving behind all their possessions.

My new acquaintance reiterated how important it was to be a citizen of a big country. He pointed out that if Iraq had waged a war against Iran for eight years without, ultimately, doing it any great harm, it was because Iran was a big country. And if Saddam Hussain had been able to take over Kuwait on the strength of a single all-out military operation, it was because Kuwait was a small country.

The Nature of the Problem

If the Kuwaiti's analysis of the situation appeared simplistic in the case of his own country, I had nevertheless to agree with it in principle. It struck me, indeed, that if the smaller nations suffered from this sense of insecurity, would not the border states of India – Punjab, Kashmir, Assam – be similarly afflicted, if they ever managed to secede from the Indian Union? If the campaigns they launched to become separate states ever fructified. Would they not be weaker and more vulnerable even than Kuwait? What, in reality, did they hope to gain from independence?

I came to the conclusion that if they made such demands, without realizing their imprudence, it was because of the kind of discontent which arises from an underestimation of what is available coupled with an overestimation of what is not. Assam, Punjab and Kashmir are ranked among the more affluent states of India. Yet their citizens seem permanently disgruntled. This is because they set no proper value on what is available to them and keep their sights resolutely fixed on those they imagine to be better situated. They do not realize that in the process of trying to achieve further gains, they are likely to lose what they already possess.

In case of Kashmir, the notion of independence arose from Sheikh Abdullah's not being content with the Chief Ministership which went with Kashmir's affiliation to India, and his eagerness to move up to the Prime Ministership which would go with Kashmiri independence. Such thinking developed and supported the concept of an Independent Kashmir, finally giving a strong impetus to the present movement, which has done little but deluge Kashmir in blood.

It is golden dreams such as these that have prompted the leaders of such diverse states as Kashmir, Punjab and Assam to demand the status of separate countries.

Such thinking is utterly naive. Even supposing these states succeed in freeing themselves from India, and their leaders then become the Prime Ministers of small, independent countries, their problems, instead of being solved, will merely become exacerbated. The first problem which will come to the fore human nature being what it is! – will be the jockeying for position which will take place, there being room for only one Prime Minister (or President) at the top of the political hierarchy. There will always be unrest because would be leaders cannot remain content in subordinate positions. The struggle which is now on between the state and the centre will simply repeat itself on a smaller scale, but with increased ferocity, within the framework of the newly formed country.

As a result, various kinds of evils will appear. The "free country", instead of heading towards progress, will become entangled in innumerable problems arising from internal strife. One example of this today can be seen in Bangladesh.

Ideally, politics should be result-oriented. They should function on the principle that energy should never be wasted on attempts to reach unattainable goals. All efforts should be directed towards that which can in practice be achieved. Politics should be seen as the art of the possible.

The ideal state, unfortunately, is not a possibility in this world. Here one has to be content with considerably less than the ideal. It is a wise man who grasps this reality. Through willingness to accept, one is at least left with the energy and resources to achieve what is possible. Attempting the impossible should simply not be contemplated, because, in the process, precious time is wasted, human strength is burnt up and material resources are squandered.

In a similar way, during another journey, I happened to meet a Bangladeshi Muslim who was on his way to Karachi to find a job. I said to him, "You fought Pakistan to have an independent country. And you used to call Bangladesh 'golden' Bangla. Then how is it that you are seeking your future in Pakistan?" He replied, "Those were all slogans shouted by the leaders. The truth is that, before the emergence of Bangladesh, we were in a far better position."

Let us take a closer look at why the movement for an independent Bangladesh was launched, leading to its separation from Pakistan in 1971. The actual cause was the envy aroused by the Punjabis holding sway in the army and having a monopoly of the lucrative government posts at the time of partition. This was a continuing state of affairs and, as such, became a source of anger and resentment to the Bengalis.

They felt that they had freed themselves from the British only to enter instead into the servitude of the Punjabis. This was what led them to launch yet another campaign for freedom.

This movement, however, with its heavily emotional overtones, turned out to be ill-founded. The actual cause of the Bangladeshis' backwardness was not their having been forced into servitude, but their low level of educational achievement, for which their own shortcomings and negligence were to be blamed. The proper solution would have been self-adjustment within the Pakistani framework and hard work to compensate for their educational inadequacies. But, unfortunately, the leaders of Bangladesh, being shallow-minded, chose to make capital out of this public unrest. Laying all the blame in their own weaknesses at the door of Pakistan, they launched a fiery movement which strongly projected their hatred for their imagined oppressors. Bangladesh did, as a result, win political independence. But when no attempt has been made to remove the real cause of the people's discontent, revolution has only amounted to further destruction, but in a new guise.

The common error of all the movements to have separate states in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir is that they result from the local people's sense of grievance against the Centre. Now even if these grievances were genuine, their underlying causes should be sought elsewhere. The leaders of these states have nevertheless held New Delhi wholly responsible for this public discontent, and have presented this as reason enough to launch campaigns for independence. Supposing these movements succeed, the people they are meant to benefit will, on the contrary, find themselves ultimately in a worse predicament. If at all these states survive, it will only be as weak and impoverished countries which have no role to play in the Indian, Asian or international political scene. Each will have succeeded in creating just one more Bangladesh.

The Reality

It is common knowledge that our present world is a world of competition. And competition is an ever-present phenomenon. As a result, some forge ahead, while others are left behind. Some succeed in acquiring more of the material things of life, while others have to be satisfied with less. But this state of affairs does not have to be viewed as permanent. There are always opportunities for the laggards and the unfortunate to surpass the more immediately successful by dint of sheer hard work. Conversely, there is also the possibility that those who have once succeeded may stumble and fall back to their original positions, often simply by neglecting to keep on working hard or to remain on the lookout for fresh opportunities. They thus make way for those who are more determined about succeeding.

This being the present reality, the secret of success lies, not in confrontational activities, but in the persistent exploitation of one's own potential. Had the Bangladeshis applied themselves in the field of education and economy, they would one day have surpassed the Punjabis they envied so much. But, by engaging themselves in negative politics, they have merely contributed to their own destruction. Moreover if the people of Punjab, Assam and Kashmir were to exert themselves in constructive fields like

education and commerce, they could set a shining example to the entire country. As it is, by embroiling themselves in negative movements, they are only frittering away their opportunities. Their campaign for independence, with its strong element of terrorism, is propelling them downwards on the path to destruction. And if this campaign 'succeeds', they will come into possession of a country that has been weakened to the point of utter ruination.

The best example for our Punjabi, Assamese and Kashmiri brothers is that of the Japanese who, by willingly remaining under American subjugation after World War II, freed themselves of the necessity to enter into either underground activities against, or open confrontations with a superior power. They were thus able to devote themselves single-mindedly to their own national reconstruction. In this they have been so successful that Japanese industry is now posing an economic challenge to the USA itself. Unfortunately, however, our brothers have chosen to model themselves upon the Bangladeshis, who have achieved independence, but have lost everything else in the process. What they have lost was, indeed, far more precious than what – after a bloodbath – they 'gained'.

Conclusion

There are many people in this country who, having reached the nadir of despair, have no positive encouragement to offer. Aghast at the present deterioration in national affairs, they can only wait in trepidation to see how the uncertain future of this country will resolve itself. There is another group, however, which is full of optimism. It holds that the present situation should be perceived as 'creative ferment' or 'transitional turmoil'. This is neither clearer nor more positive than what the first group has to say. If the former is marked by abysmal hopelessness, the latter is marked by unfounded hope.

The truth is that the present situation has grown out of a general failure to appreciate our national imperatives. This trend can be reversed only by countering the flow of misinformation and reestablishing current priorities. For this to be successful, conscious-raising is a *sine qua non*, and for all right-thinking leaders this should be a willingly undertaken and unremitting labour. It is a task which needs, in fact, to be undertaken on the same massive scale as in Japan and the USA, without which these countries could never have reached their present level of development.

In India, the work of consciousness-raising has never been adequately tackled, either before or after 1947. Over the last one hundred years, there has been hardly a single serious effort worthy of the name. This is what has made a mockery of any genuine aspirations we may have had towards national integration. We must first recognize the realities underlying our disunity, and then do our utmost to remedy these shortcomings, if we are ever to set our feet upon the path of national unity.

14 April 1991

Lost to the World

"I have seen people among the Prophet's companions to whom the world meant less than the dust under their feet." Thus spoke Hasan Basri, the great 8th century religious scholar, to his awed contemporaries. He was well qualified to judge, for he had met a large number of them, seventy of whom had fought at Badr. He told them of how they wore simple, homespun camel hair garments, and were so preoccupied with righteous living that they seemed lost to the world. "Were they to see the best among you, they would think: 'These people have no connection with Islam.' And if they saw the worst among you, they would say, 'These people do not believe in the Day of Judgement.'"

Islam: The Creator of the Modern Age

The Emergence of Science

In the history of Europe the period from the sixth to the tenth century A.D, is known as the Dark Ages. This is a period when Europe was far from civilization. "For Europe it was a period of intellectual darkness and barbarity." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. III p. 380)

The term 'Dark Ages' was applicable, however, only to Europe. When Europe was enveloped in the murk of the Dark Ages, the light of civilization shone brightly throughout the world of Islam. As Bertrand Russell puts it in his *History of Western Philosophy*, "From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished." (p. 395).

This Islamic civilization, which entered Europe via Sicily and Spain, exerted a strong influence there, so much so that students from western Europe started coming to receive their education in the Islamic universities of Spain. Many from the Muslim world likewise went to Europe. When Europeans realised that the Muslims had gone far ahead of them in education, they began to render books written by Muslim scholars into Latin. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says: "Most of the classical literature that spurred the European Renaissance was obtained from translations of Arabic manuscripts in Muslim libraries." (vol. 15, p. 646).

In modern times, a large number of scholars, for instance, Gustav Liban, Robert Briffault, J.M. Robert, Montgomery Watt, and so on, have clearly acknowledged that it was the investigations and discoveries of the Arabs that paved the way for modern science in Europe. It would be correct to say that this is a universally known fact. The only point on which we must differ is that the event recorded as 'Muslim history' should come under the heading of 'Islamic history'. An event thus attributed to a people should have been attributed rather to God.

Some Examples

In ancient times certain things were considered holy according to the polytheistic set of beliefs then prevalent. This mentality had closed the door to independent thinking on the subject of natural phenomena. Then came the revolution brought about by monotheism. For the first time in human history, this produced the right atmosphere for freedom of enquiry. Every thing then began to be studied without any hesitation. The monotheistic revolution thus founded the very first original basis for scientific thinking along systematic lines. Scientific research had, of course, been carried out prior to this, but, due to the unfavourable atmosphere, it had not been welcomed with approval or recognition. Without this, no further advances could be made in this sphere.

Galileo (d. 1642) is generally considered to be the inventor of the telescope. But the truth is that, long before his time, Abu Ishaq ibn Jundub (d. 767) had already made observations of the heavens. He had devised certain rules for observing distant objects and, in accordance with those rules, he had invented a telescopic instrument. It was this initial telescope which was developed by Galileo, and which was the actual forerunner of the now highly perfected electric telescope of modern times.

The basis of modern science is observation. But, in ancient times, several kinds of superstitious beliefs barred the way to such activity. Jabir ibn Hayyan (d. 817), however, understanding the importance of observation, used findings based thereon in his scientific studies, the written accounts of which were transmitted to Europe in translations. Thinking went on developing along these lines until it formed the basis for experimental science as it is known today.

The first person in history to advance the theory of inertia in material bodies was Abu Ali Hasan ibn Al-Haytham (d. 1021). This discovery reached Europe, where scholars subjected it to further scrutiny. It was formulated, much later, as Newton's law of motion, namely, that every body continues in its state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, except in so far as it is compelled by external forces to change that state. Then again it was ibn-Haytham who originally discovered that the path taken by a ray of light or other wave motion in traversing the distance between any two points is such that the time taken is a minimum. This discovery later became known as Fermat's principle of least time.

The Age of the Earth

Scientists have not been able to agree on the date of man's emergence on earth. However, they have discovered some human skeleton which they believe to date back to ten thousand years before Christ. The scientists do not, therefore, accept the assertions on this subject made by the Bible. According to the dates for the appearance of the human race given in the book of Genesis, Adam came to the world (thirty seven) hundred years before Christ. The Jewish Calendar, which follows the data contained in the old Testament, places the dates very precisely. The second half of the Christian year 1975 corresponds to the beginning of the 5,736th year of the creation of the world. According to modern science, this is wholly unacceptable.

The Christians, as it would appear from Biblical narratives, had condensed the life-span of the earth to within a few thousand years. The error of this calculation, from the scientific point of view, came to light in the eighteenth century when James Hutton, a great geologist, carried out his investigations. He devoted his whole life to studying the construction of the earth and its rocks, which showed that the earth in its present form has evolved over millions of years.

Charles Lyell's observations subsequently confirmed Hutton's theory. The first volume of his renowned book, *Principles of Geology* was first published in 1830. This book was to a great extent responsible for the disappearance of the Biblical time-scale from all serious discussion. "Indeed, Lyell's books were

largely responsible for convincing the world at large that the Bible could be wrong, at any rate in some respects – a hitherto unthinkable thought.” (Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe*, p. 29)

Concepts of the kind enshrined in the Bible acted as barriers to the scientific progress of Europe. Anyone who dared to present any theory other than those approved of by the Church risked being severely chastised on the grounds that his theory was sac-religious. But, in Islam, such unreal concepts had never gained currency. That is why no religious opposition presented itself when scientific research began in Islamic Spain.

Greek Sciences

The modern age of progress began in Europe between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. This age is generally referred to as the Renaissance, which means revival, or rebirth. The Europeans associate this age of renaissance with Greece, a European country. They present the modern age of Europe as being, in fact, a revival of the ideas of Greek antiquity. But the truth is that Europe went through a period of awakening, rather than of rebirth or revival. And this was the first time in the history of Europe that this had happened. Now scholars have accepted that the Renaissance of the West is a direct gift from the Arabs. Briffault writes:

“The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries of revolutionary theories. Science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence” (Making of Humanity, p. 190). He goes on to say:

“It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern industrial civilization would never have arisen at all” (p.202)

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1984) says that libraries formed important features of Islamic society. There were a number of institutions which possessed more than one lakh books. ‘Most of the classical literature that spurred the European Renaissance was obtained from translations of Arabic manuscripts in Muslim libraries. (15/646).

To some the achievement of the Arabs is at best their transmission of the Greek sciences to Europe through translations. As Professor Hitti puts it in his book, *History of the Arabs*:

“This stream (of Greek culture) was redirected into Europe by the Arabs in Spain and Sicily, whence it helped create the Renaissance of Europe.” (p. 307)

Such an assertion is not, however, correct, for what the Arabs had received from Greek philosophers was not experimental knowledge but theoretical argument. In other words, what they received from the Greeks was not science but philosophy. Science, as we now understand it, had never existed in Greece. Science, or knowledge based on experimentation, is the invention of the Muslims. It was the Muslims who first attained to knowledge through observation, and then communicated it to other nations, particularly those situated in Europe.

Bertrand Russell has rightly said: Science, ever since the time of the Arabs, has had two functions: (1) to enable us to know things, and (2) to enable us to do things. The Greeks, with the exception of Archimedes, were only interested in the first of these ... Interest in the practical uses of science came first through superstition and magic.”

He goes on to say: “To modern educated people, it seems obvious that matters of fact are to be ascertained by observation, not by consulting ancient authorities. But this is an entirely modern conception, which hardly existed before the seventeenth century. Aristotle maintained that women have fewer teeth than men; although he was twice married, it never occurred to him to verify this statement by examining his wives’ mouths.”

Citing further examples of this nature, Russell observes that Aristotle made many assertions about things without ever observing them, and that his adherents continued to repeat them without putting them to the test of observation.

It is essential for scientists to observe and experiment on things in depth to have a correct knowledge of their nature. But an atmosphere conducive to such procedures did not exist among the Greeks or in other ancient nations. Because objects other than God had sacredness attributed to them, they developed an aura of mystery and became sacrosanct in the eyes of the peoples. With the result that magic, superstition and the worship of non-gods became widely prevalent.

These grave misconceptions stood in the way of scientific enquiry into the nature of things. When people believe that events take place by magic, or that natural phenomena have divine properties of a mystical nature, no thinking can develop which will lead to research on the nature of these things. In such an atmosphere, it is but natural that such a mentality will develop as will grovel to magic and superstition.

The Arabs of ancient times had similarly been held in thrall by superstition. For them too, as in other nations, it had become a mental block. But when an intellectual revolution was brought about amongst them by Islam, this mental block very soon evaporated. Now they began to look at things as they were. whereas prior to this revolution they had viewed the same objects as sacred and mysterious. It is this intellectual revolution which produced among Arabs scientific thinking for the first time in human history. By developing this line of thought, they became the giver people; they gave to the whole world what in modern times, is called Science.

A Tiger is Watching Us

Jim Corbett, the Englishman who is now famous for his book *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, first came to India in 1907. When he learnt that there were many man-eating tigers in the jungles of Kumaon, he decided to go there and to take along his rifle. In 1907, he shot dead his first man-eater, one which had killed and eaten 430 human beings.

Jim Corbett spent 22 years in the jungles of Kumaon, and risked his life to kill more than a dozen man-eaters. The only rewarding aspect of this hazardous adventure was, as he put it, "the satisfaction at having made a small portion of the earth safe for a girl to walk on."

Giving details of his experiences of confrontations with tigers in *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, he writes, "The near proximity of a tiger in daylight, even when it has not seen you, causes a disturbance in the bloodstream. When the tiger is not an ordinary one, however, but a man-eater, and the time is ten o'clock on a dark night, and you know the man-eater is watching you, the disturbance in the blood becomes a storm,"

If the feeling that a tiger is near, and is watching one, causes a disturbance in the bloodstream, what will happen when one realizes that God, who is the creator of all tigers and of the heavens and the earth is near one, and is watching one, and that nothing can be hidden from His view?

The Wave of the Future

In a two-page article published in the New Delhi *Organiser* Weekly on October 21, 1990, under the title of the 'Hindu Wave', Mr. J. Dubashi takes great pride in saying that the Hindus are the 'wave of the future', and that Advani's Rath Yatra is a symbol of that Wave. He makes this point over and over again, and in a variety of ways, with specific reference to those who have launched violent movements to build the Ram Mandir after demolishing the Babari Masjid. In reality, this 'Hindu Wave' consists basically of large numbers of Hindus in northern India who have been brought together and worked up into a frenzy by their leaders making highly charged speeches on this issue.

Shree Advani's rath, which had to reach Ayodhya by travelling a distance of ten thousand kilometers was not a true Ram Rath, but a rath of hatred and violence. Its aim was to unite Hindus on negative bases. The mentality at work behind this movement can be gauged by the statements made by Mr. Ashok Singhal, General Secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. For instance, in a speech he made on November 7, 1990, in New Delhi, he issued a warning to Muslims that they must stop opposing the plan to build the Ram Mandir after demolishing the Babari Masjid, otherwise they would launch movements to demolish three thousand mosques so that they could build temples on their site. (*Times of India*, November 8, 1990).

Such provocative statements are being made by the leaders of the Bhartiya Janta Party, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal etc. and great crowds of people are being collected on this issue. Is this what is called the 'Hindu Wave'?

Anyone who is conversant with the Hindu religion, and who gives any serious thought to the matter, will be forced to acknowledge that this is not the 'Hindu Wave'. It would be more appropriate to call it the anti-Hindu Wave.

Two concepts are fundamental to the teachings of Hindu dharm, one being tolerance and the other being non-violence. You may pick up any book on Hinduism and you will find in it these two ideals. Indeed, these characteristics of Hinduism have always been a source of pride to their thinkers and reformers.

There is detailed article on Hinduism in the 8th volume of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1984) which says; "In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. The Hindu is inclined to revere the divine in every manifestation, whatever it may be, and is doctrinally tolerant, leaving others – including both Hindus and non-Hindus – whatever creed and worship practices suit them best." (p. 888).

The teaching of non-violence, which is a very important part of Hinduism, has been described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1984) as follows:

Ahimsa (non-violence) consisting in respect of and consideration for life and fellow feeling with all living beings, is based on belief in the unity of all life. One of the cardinal virtues of Indian humanity, *ahimsa* is, according to Indian thinkers, the keystone of their ethics.” (p. 889)

Looked at from this viewpoint, the Ram Janam Bhumi movement, in its present form, is clearly at variance with true Hindu dharm, in that it tramples upon religious tolerance, deliberately propagates hatred and prefers the path of violence to that of nonviolence. It would, therefore, be correct to say that, as such, the wave caused by this movement is an anti-Hindu Wave rather than a Hindu wave, in the real sense of the word.

This is why Hindus themselves in their thousands have protested against this movement and dubbed it 'non-Hindu'. For instance, the late Kamalapati Tripathi, an elder statesman and established scholar of the Hindu religion, wrote an article for a Hindi journal in his last days on the Babari Masjid – Ram Janam Bhumi problem entitled, 'Sampardaik Samasya', (communal problem), in which he lambasts the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, maintaining that the very idea of demolishing a mosque was "a negation of the Hindu ethos. It is a fascist idea and will break the country."

If the present wave had been 'Hindu Wave' in the real sense of the word, the results produced would have borne the distinguishing characteristics of the Hindu religion. Then denial would have yielded to acceptance, because negation, according to Hindu teaching is an evil. Acceptance of others is a distinctive feature of Hinduism because of its belief in the many-sidedness of reality. Hinduism regards all differing views as new facets of truth. Had this new wave been genuinely Hindu in character, tolerance would ultimately have won the day, because Hindu thought holds that while believing that you are on the right path, you must also believe that others too, are on the right path, irrespective of how much the views of others appear to run counter to your own. After the spread of such a wave, an atmosphere of peace and goodwill and respect for others' lives should have been in evidence all over the country, because Hindu dharm regards the taking of a life as the most heinous evil. A certain Hindu thinker has even maintained that the "killing of a sensation is a sin."

But in practice, we are witnessing a totally different state of affairs. How then can we call this wave a 'Hindu Wave'?

If a militant group managed to collect large crowds in public places by making rabble-rousing speeches and then launched a violent and destructive movement, could they conceivably call this a 'Gandhi Wave'? They would certainly be wrong to give their activities this name because such a wave would be more correctly described as 'anti-Gandhi'.

The campaign launched against the retention of the Babari Masjid is called Hindutva. But this movement is in reality directed against Muslims. As such, it has been explained by Mr. Advani as minorityism versus nationalism.' (*India Today*, October 31, 1990, p.59)

The violence of the movement launched by our Hindu brothers on this issue is clearly against the spirit of tolerance, *ahimsa* and respect for others, which are the basic tenets of Hinduism. As such, this movement (i.e. being anti-minority) should be called the anti-Hindu rather than the Hindu wave.

Creed or History

A claim has been made that Ayodhya's Babari Masjid was built on the exact site of the Ram Janam Bhumi, and that the Ram Mandir should, therefore, be built by demolishing the mosque. No attention has been paid to the fact that to date this claim remains unsubstantiated.

It is a matter of historical record that the Babari Masjid was built in 1528. Forty years after this building was erected, Tulsi Das (d. 1623 in Varanasi) went to Ayodhya. There he visited the mandirs and wrote a book on Ram's life entitled, *Ram Charit Manus* (1574-76 in Avdhi language. This book gives full details of the life of Ram, but makes no mention of the Ram Mandir having been demolished to make way for a mosque.

This took place during the reign of Akbar the Great (1542-1605), who was generally known to be a pro-Hindu King. Even his queen was a Hindu lady. Had Babar's governor, Mir Baqi, demolished a mandir and constructed a mosque on its site, Tulsi Das could have pointed this out to Akbar with impunity. And had Tulsi Das made this known to him, then either Akbar would have immediately issued a decree to hand over the building to the Hindus, or there would at least have been some mention of this in his book as a matter of record.

When such facts are set before the present Hindu militants, they say that, as far as they are concerned, it is all a matter of creed. Consequently, they will not listen to anything connected with history, nor will they accept the court's verdict. They say this is because a matter of religious creed is the concern neither of history nor of the court.

This reply is quite illogical and, therefore, totally inappropriate. It may be true that religious creed has nothing to do with history or the court, but the "building of a mosque after having demolished a temple" is certainly more a matter of history than of creed. If it is stated, for example, that "Ram was the avtar of Vishnu", that is undoubtedly a matter of creed. But if a certain mosque is built by demolishing a temple, that is undoubtedly a matter of history. And in case of controversy, it can certainly be brought under the jurisdiction of the law after consultation of historical records in order to settle the issue.

Upholders of such an illogical viewpoint do no great service to Hindu society. Their only achievement has been to divert Hindu society from its finest traditions. Right from the time of Swami Vivekananda's speech at America's Parliament of Religions (1893) till today, tens of thousand of Hindu religious leaders have been given a cordial welcome in western countries. The reason is Hinduism's traditions of tolerance and non-violence. Now, do the extremist Hindus want to close this whole chapter of their history? Do they want to deprive Hinduism of the attraction which has brought near a large number of people from the far corners of the globe?

Without a Country

Ali Zakaria Al-Ansari, Kuwait's ambassador to India, and former ambassador to a number of other countries, suddenly received the news on August 2, 1990, that Iraq had sent its powerful army into Kuwait and had annexed it to Iraq. *The Times of India* correspondent, Mr. Chidanand Rajghatta met the Kuwaiti ambassador in his palatial home in New Delhi on August 19, 1990. He reports that the sixty-year old Mr. Al-Ansari was in the state of mental agony because, due to all communication links being cut off, he had no news of his wife and two children in Kuwait. But even worse were his feelings at being without a country; "More than a week after mighty Iraq's sudden aggression against his country, the 60-year old envoy is yet to overcome the shock and trauma of losing his country overnight. One evening it was there, and on the morrow.. gone." (p. 20).

Prior to death everyone belongs to a country. But, after death everyone will become a man without a country. Everyone will go through this experience, not just for a temporary period of time, but for all eternity. The wise man is one who is prepared for this eventuality before death; who can realize when he sees a country being taken away from others, that one day his own country too will likewise be taken away from him